



Grease Goblin

Are You Feeding the Grease Goblin?

Proper maintenance of grease traps and new 'green' alternatives can lower costs, improve marketing for restaurants

Claudia Rumfelt-Wright
Environmental Health

Wastewater collection and treatment in cities or counties is big business but also a big problem.

It is necessary, almost imperative, to remove grease to have a functioning wastewater system. The fact that grease is not soluble in water and tends to coat surfaces causes the problem. If grease is not disposed of in the right way, it may stick to pipes' surfaces and cause sewage backup or water treatment plant problems.

Grease traps or interceptors and the growing biodiesel industry may provide the answer to the growing problem. Restaurants have long been required to have grease traps or interceptors;

however, the quality of the grease trap does not matter if it is not properly maintained. It is important to repair or replace grease traps regularly.

Restaurants across the country are discovering that going green is an easy solution to their grease problems. According to the National Restaurant Association, three out of four restaurants use products made from recycled materials. Recycling grease and oil for the production of biodiesel fuel – a clean burning, non-toxic alternative fuel – is just one way to keep operating costs down and go green at the same time.

Another consideration is the value of the used grease, oil and fats (FOG) that are a byproduct of restaurant operations. With the growing biodiesel industry, there is now a demand for used grease and oil. Not only is it reasonable to expect some return for your grease, it is also a point of leverage to cut your operating cost by receiving free or minimal charges for pick up of your FOG.

The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance, or DPPEA, provides tips on its Web site, www.p2pays.org, for restaurant recycling and waste reduction issues.

For the proper installation and maintenance of a grease trap, DPPEA recommends the following:

- Make sure the grease trap is properly sized, constructed and installed. If the unit is too close to the FOG discharge and does not have enough volume to allow amassing of the FOG, the oils will pass through the unit without being captured. Assistance with this process can be obtained by contacting your local county and city representatives and by examining guidance documents provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Ensure all grease-bearing drains discharge to the grease trap. These include mop sinks, woks, wash sinks, prep sinks, utility sinks, pulpers, dishwashers and pre-rinse sinks. No toilet wastes should be plumbed to the grease trap.
- Do not use hot water, acids, caustics, solvents or emulsifying agents when cleaning grease traps.
- Never hot flush or continuously run hot water over the grease trap. The heated, liquefied grease will be flushed down the sewer. Remember, the restaurant is liable for any costs associated with clogs caused by the flushing.
- Remove any water in the trap to facilitate cleaning. The water should be discharged to the sanitary sewer system.
- Remove the baffles if possible.
- Dip the accumulated grease out of the interceptor and deposit in a watertight container. This service is also provided by some of the rendering and recycling businesses in the area.
- Scrape the sides, lid and baffles with a putty knife to remove as much of the grease as possible. Deposit it into a watertight container.
- Contact a hauler or recycler for grease pick-up.
- Replace the baffle and the lid.
- Record the date and volume of grease removed on a maintenance log.